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## NOTES ON THE HEBREW VERB—PLURAL IN Â.

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In “miscellaneous notes”\* I called attention to what seemed to me instances of the use of 3d fem. plur. in â in the perfect of the Hebrew verb, as in other Semitic languages. To the few cases there enumerated I am now able, largely through the kindness of Mr. W. R. Newbold, to add the following: Deut. xxxii. 27; Josh. xvii. 18; 1 Sam. iv. 15; Isa. lxvi. 18 (if the text be not corrupt); Jer. xlviii. 15, 41 (twice); li. 29; Ps. xviii. 35 (in the parallel passage, 2 Sam. xxii. 35, a 3d sing. masc. verb is used with a fem. plur. noun); lxviii. 14. To these ten should be added the following, which have been changed by the Massoretes into plurals in â: Num. xxxiv. 4; Deut. xxi. 7; Josh. xv. 4; xviii. 12, 14, 19; 1 Kgs. xxii. 49; Jer. ii. 15; xxii. 16; iv. 6; twenty cases in all.

These are ordinarily explained by the grammarians as incorrect or careless usage, or as mere scribal errors, an explanation entirely inadequate in view both of their number, and also of the fact that every other Semitic language (including the Hebrew itself in the imperfect) possesses the feminine plural in â.

There are further two cases, 2 Kgs. xxiv. 10 and Job xvi. 16, where the plural in â is used with masculine nouns. I would also suggest as a possible emendation in Job xxvi. 13, שְׁפָרָהּ for שְׁפָרָה, which would bring this passage under the same head.

In my note on the formation of the imperfect in the same issue I neglected to notice three cases of the formation of the 3d fem. plur. with the prefix שׁ, as in other Semitic languages, viz., Gen. xxx. 38; 1 Sam. vi. 12; Dan. viii. 22.

The origin and force of the suffixes and prefixes of perfect and imperfect seem to me to be as follows: In the perfect the simple form of the verb remained unchanged in the most usual person, i. e., the 3d person, the 1st and 2d persons being differentiated by pronominal suffixes. The simple verb form was finally limited to the most usual forms of the third person, i. e., the 3d sing. masc., and the other gender and number were differentiated by suffixes of the same nature as those used in noun declension. Accordingly the feminine was indicated by t, the masc. plur. by û (cf. in noun declension ê and î), and the fem. plur. by â (cf. in noun declension â and t, modified to ôt). As in the case of nouns the fem. sing. in *at* ultimately gave place to â, and in consequence the fem. plur. went out of use to a great extent, the masc. plur. taking its place.

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\* HEBRAICA, III., p. 111.

The imperfect is indicated by prefixes. The weakest possible consonantal prefix, ʾ (or, in Aramaean, ʾ), represents, if I may so express it, this principle of prefixing, having in itself no value of person or number. As above explained, the form with ʾ was ultimately appropriated for the 3d person, the other persons being indicated by pronominal prefixes. As in the perfect, the feminine was indicated by t, which, following the characteristic imperfect principle, was placed at the beginning, not the end, of the word. The plural was formed as in the perfect by adding û and â (the latter becoming nâ by insertion of euphonic ʾ). No plural ending was added in the first person, because the prefix in itself constituted a sufficient differentiation. Similarly the 3d fem. plur. was originally formed without the feminine prefix, the ending constituting a sufficient differentiation from the 3d plur. masc. Later, in Hebrew, the feminine t was prefixed to this form also, and the older plural form, יִקְטְלֵנָּה, was lost from general use.